
Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides healthful meals and snacks for children and adults enrolled in a variety of day care settings. It reimburses participating day care providers for serving meals that meet Federal guidelines. This Federal meal program operates in family or group day care homes, child care centers, adult day care centers for elderly and impaired adults, emergency shelters that provide meals to homeless children, and after-school programs that provide educational or enrichment activities.

The program improves the diets of children and adults in day care settings and raises awareness of good nutrition. Providers' participation in this program can be an indicator of higher quality day care. Meeting the minimum requirements (e.g., obtaining a license or alternate approval, serving nutritionally balanced snacks and meals in age-appropriate portions, adhering to strict meal plans, maintaining accurate program records) demonstrates administrative capability and attention to detail sometimes lacking in unregulated day care settings. Day care homes that participate in this program are subject to regular in-home monitoring. Providers receive training on nutrition-related and administrative topics.

Program Access for Parents or Caretakers of Children and Dependent Adults

- ☐ Is there an easy way for parents and caretakers to learn the identity of homes and centers that participate in this Federal meal program? (Sources for this information include child care resource and referral agencies, licensing units, and State education agencies.)
- ☐ Do child care resource and referral agencies routinely tell parents and caretakers about day care facilities that participate in this program?
- ☐ Do local food stamp offices, WIC clinics, and related health and social service agencies provide information on the Child and Adult Care Food Program to parents and caretakers who need day care services?

- ☐ Are there any public service announcements on local radio or TV or other advertisements about the Child and Adult Care Food Program?

The availability of lists of participating homes and centers and information on how the program raises the quality of care can help parents and caretakers assess their options when considering day care services.

Program Access for After-School Care Program

- ☐ Are organizations offering after-school programs aware that USDA will assist them in the financing of nutritious snacks?

Under this Federal program, institutions in low-income locations can receive cash reimbursement for nutritious snacks served to children through age 18 if they participate in an after-school education or enrichment program. Programs that offer only competitive sports are not eligible.





Program Access for Children Living in Emergency Shelters

- ☐ Are emergency shelters that provide meals to homeless children participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program?
- ☐ As a result of a new law that became effective July 1999, emergency shelters which serve homeless children and their families can participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Reimbursable meals and snacks may be served to residential children age 12 years and younger, migrant children age 15 and younger, and children with disabilities, regardless of their age.

Program Access for Day Care Providers

- ☐ Are day care centers operating in your community aware of the services provided by the Child and Adult Care Food Program?
- ☐ In States that require licensing for family day care providers, does the State licensing agency tell applicants how to participate in this program?
- ☐ In States that do not require licensing for family day care providers, is information readily available from the State on how to obtain alternate approval to participate in this program?

(The State agency responsible for this program is usually in the education or social services department.)

Improving access to the Child and Adult Care Food Program can expand the availability of quality day care for working parents in your community. Program participation sometimes requires that day care homes and centers acquire a formal license from the State or county in which they are located. In some States, a license is not required; instead, unlicensed homes may acquire alternate approval to participate, a process that usually involves a home visit.

Role of Sponsors

- ☐ Is there a sponsoring agency in your community that administers this program for homes and centers?
- ☐ Are sponsoring agencies receiving referrals from the State licensing agency and other child or adult care referral sources?
- ☐ Are sponsors actively recruiting day care homes to participate in this program?

Family day care homes can only participate in this Federal meal program under the administration of an approved sponsor. Day care centers have the option of participating independently or under the administrative authority of a sponsor.

Sponsors make the Child and Adult Care Food Program work. They monitor family child care providers for compliance with program rules, determine their total reimbursement for meals served, submit monthly food reimbursement claims for them, and provide nutrition training and education. Because sponsors receive Federal reimbursement for these expenses based on the number of homes under their sponsorship, they have a strong incentive to recruit new providers. States also play a role in matching

providers with sponsors. States with day care licensing requirements may automatically provide new providers with information about the Child and Adult Care Food Program and refer them to a sponsor in their area.

Effective Sponsors

- ☐ Do sponsors have staff expertise and materials available in foreign languages spoken in their community?
- ☐ Do sponsors support day care homes in rural areas, low-income neighborhoods, housing projects, and other historically under-served locations in your community?

FNS provides extra funding for sponsors to recruit family day care providers in rural and low-income areas. FNS strongly promotes the recruitment and participation of day care homes in under-served and low-income locations. Because many potential participants speak a language other than English, sponsors can increase the number of homes they administer that serve diverse populations by hiring staff who can speak, read, and write in the language of their community's population.

- ☐ Are sponsors and day care home providers offering nutrition education for program participants?
Are sponsors offering menu planning assistance to their providers?
- ☐ Are sponsors conducting in-home monitoring?

REQUIRED

Serving nutritious snacks and meals for children and adults in the program is an easy way to provide nutrition education. Learning that healthful meals taste good can encourage both children and adults to eat healthier, more nutritious diets. This can be reinforced through formal nutrition education, including lessons about the food guide pyramid, shopping for and preparing balanced menus, and the relationship between nutrition and health.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE PROGRAM

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- ▶ Encourage your day care provider to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and urge other parents in your community to encourage their providers.
- ▶ Encourage local social service agencies to sponsor day care homes or have their day care facilities participate in this program.
- ▶ If your day care home provider or center already participates in this program, encourage it to provide nutrition education as a regular part of its program.
- ▶ Determine if family emergency shelters in your community are participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. If not, encourage them to find out about this program.

FNS CAN HELP:

- ▶ For more information about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, including the name and location of the State agency that administers this program, see the FNS web site www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/Default.htm.